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SUBJECT: S/E NATSIOS MEETS WITH UN ENVOY ON EVE OF STRATEGY  
RETREAT

REF: A. KNOPF-AF/SPG E-MAIL 10/04/2007

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 01548

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) On the eve of a UN and AU retreat in Addis Ababa to strategize on the Darfur political process, UN Envoy Jan Eliasson told S/E Natsios that the first order of business for the Darfur peace negotiations will be achieving a cessation of hostilities. It is important to "stay the course" despite the myriad obstacles facing the peace process, according to Eliasson, who suggested that the UN and AU are now working in concert with the SPLM to organize a preparatory meeting for Darfur's rebel movements within the week. Eliasson requested a statement by the UN Security Council in support of the Libya talks. Fostering the participation of civil society, traditional leaders, and Arab groups also remained a priority. S/E Natsios encouraged Eliasson to offer an "international guarantee" that the negotiations would include discussion of compensation, the disarmament of the Arab militias, and land returns if the Fur, most of whom support intransigent rebel leader Abdulwahid al Nur, participated in the talks. S/E Natsios cautioned Eliasson against setting artificial end dates for the process, noting that it should be inclusive in order to be sustainable. Eliasson said that the focus remained on "compact negotiations." End summary.

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Talks' Priority: Cessation of Hostilities  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) A cessation of hostilities will be the first order of business at the UN/AU-sponsored Darfur peace talks scheduled to begin in Libya at the end of October, UN Special Envoy for Darfur Jan Eliasson told S/E Natsios on October 5 in Khartoum. The UN and AU are working to develop a draft text for the cessation of hostilities and are also considering proposals from the international partners, including the UK and France, for a credible monitoring mechanism (Ref. A). The UN and AU will be holding a retreat in Addis Ababa from October 6 to 9 to develop a concrete

strategy for the negotiations, to include defining the role of the regional governments (Chad, Libya, Eritrea, and Egypt) and the rest of the international community. The "Tripoli Format" will, however, be the "main point of reference" for international engagement in the peace process.

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"Staying the Course"  
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¶3. (SBU) While the process faces a variety of obstacles, Eliasson emphasized that it is important "to stay the course as we approach the moment of truth." He predicted that the majority of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatory movements will attend the talks, with the exception of Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) faction leader Abdulwahid al Nur. Claiming he was reticent to wade into the internal politics of the UN Security Council, Eliasson nonetheless said that a formal statement of support for the UN/AU negotiations, perhaps in the form of a Presidential Statement, would be welcome prior to the start date of October 27. (Note: Eliasson plans to brief the UN Security Council on October ¶24. End note.)

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Another Try with the SPLM  
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¶4. (SBU) Acknowledging that much work remains to prepare the rebel movements for negotiations, Eliasson explained that the UN and AU are supporting the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in organizing a discrete preparatory meeting for the Darfur rebel movements in Juba on October 8. "We're helping them very concretely," said Eliasson. If the movements are still unable to unite around a negotiating team and a platform, the UN/AU will then "make a fair analysis" of who should attend the talks. The UN and AU planned to hold a series of workshops in Libya for the Darfur movements beginning October 17 but adjusting this time-frame is

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possible pending the success of the SPLM meeting, according to Eliasson. (Note: The UN's main interlocutor with the Darfur rebel groups told Poloff on October 4 that he was optimistic that the UN could persuade the majority of rebel groups to attend a meeting in Juba within the next week, with the exception of Abdulwahid loyalists and the Islamist/separatist Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). End note.)

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Advantages of Libya?  
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¶5. (SBU) While Libya is a problematic venue for the negotiations, Eliasson said that it has some advantages. First, it is "close to the ground," making it easier to bring representatives from Darfur to the negotiations. Second, the Sudanese Government sees the talks as an opportunity to increase the chance of "Libyan good behavior" and tie Tripoli to the outcome of the negotiations. Eliasson characterized MFA Secretary for African Affairs Ali Treiki as "a reasonable guy" and joked that "we should pray for his health" to offset the less constructive elements of the Libyan government.

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Participation Beyond the Rebels  
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¶6. (SBU) Participation among civil society, traditional tribal leaders, and Arab groups was critical but difficult to manage, said Eliasson. Abdul Mohammed, the head of the Darfur Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC) and an advisor to the UN/AU team charged with the peace process, described a formula for capturing these groups that would include inviting the legitimate tribal leaders of the Fur, the

Southern Riziegat, the Massalit, the Berti, and the Zaghawa plus one other tribal representative each of their choosing. Arab groups would be invited through civil society organizations that had arisen in opposition to the Sudanese Government.

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Including the Arabs  
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¶17. (SBU) S/E Natsios recalled his recent meetings with the Northern Rizeigat and Turjum tribes in South Darfur and said that the Northern Riziegat--who had participated in the Government-backed militias and were now fighting other Arab tribes--should be included in talks (Ref. B) to ensure that a political settlement is sustainable. Both the Northern Rizeigat and the Turjum had told S/E Natsios that they would commit to a cessation of hostilities and were composing delegations to represent them at the negotiations.

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Persuading the Fur  
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¶18. (SBU) S/E Natsios recommended that the UN and AU consider issuing an "international guarantee" that compensation, disarmament of the Arab militias, and land returns--the priorities of the Fur IDPs that they have characterized as "pre-conditions" for their participation in the UN/AU process--will be discussed during the talks if the Fur attend. While a symbolic gesture, such a guarantee might provide an incentive for the Fur, many of whom espouse Abdulwahid's maximalist demands, to participate. Eliasson welcomed the idea, suggesting that the UN/AU could consider putting such a statement in the declaration of objectives for the talks.

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Avoiding Absolutism  
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¶19. (SBU) Cautioning the UN/AU against setting an artificial end date for the negotiations, S/E Natsios counseled Eliasson to avoid "absolutist statements" that would exclude the participation of vital constituencies. Eliasson agreed that the situation was complex but noted that the UN/AU wanted to focus on "compact negotiations." He and AU Special Envoy for Darfur Salim Ahmed Salim would remain "responsible for the

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process" but are seeking a mediator to manage the "day-to-day" negotiations. (Note: A UN official told Poloff on October 6 that UN Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General Taye Brooke-Zerihoun had accepted an

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appointment as the mediator for the Libya negotiations. The UN will not make a public announcement about the appointment to avoid the appearance that Taye was abandoning the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). End note.)

¶10. (U) S/E Natsios' staff cleared this message.

¶11. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.  
FERNANDEZ